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ABSTRACT

Field trips allow students unique access to resources not available in the classroom. Field experiences enhance students' understanding, are a factor in retention, can be motivational, and are essential for the acquisition of basic science skills. Students learn, in a meaningful way, the procedures of setting goals, observing and recording data, and returning to interpret data. Planning a field trip begins with a preparation of objectives linking classroom study to the field experience. Trips need not be long. Many educationally sound trips are possible within the school grounds or within walking distance of the school, and these sorts of trips have the advantages of allowing follow-up visits for extended observation or projects. Such trips also minimize the scheduling and transportation problems associated with other sorts of field trips. The success of most field trips depends on leadership rather than location. Longer field trips require additional planning for educational objectives and for transportation, parental permission, and liability insurance. One adult should accompany each six to eight children. If a tour guide is not hired, the instructor should visit the site in advance. The report includes 10 references, and checklists to decide if the trip is appropriate, to plan the trip, and to follow up and evaluate the experience. (SV)

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SO YOU WANT TO TAKE A FIELD TRIP . . .

Field trips allow students unique opportunities to observe academic, cultural, and physical resources not available in the classroom. Field experiences may enhance students' understanding and have a positive influence on them and their future studies. MacKenzie & White (1982), found field trips are a factor in retention. In addition, they found excursions, wherein the students are active, were superior to passive programs. Field trips have been found to be motivational. Chrouser (1984) & Ignatiuk (1978) and Kern & Carpenter (1984) all reported evidence which supports the use of field experiences to motivate students. If a field trip is properly conducted, sttudents can develop a zest for learning (McKenzie, Utgard & Lisowski, 1986). In addition, attitudes may be positively influenced toward performing certain tasks and experiencing different activities (McKenzie, Utgard & Lisowski, 1986). Field experiences are esential for the acquisition of the basic skills of science. Students can observe scientific phenomena first hand; they see (habits of animals), hear (sounds of animals), feel (textures of plants, rocks, etc.), smell (flowers), and taste (salt, flowers, and newly baked bread). Sorrentino & Bell (1970) found an increase in knowledge to be one value associated with field trips. Research by Benz (1962) and Schellhammer (1935) support field trips for the acquisition of knowledge. Besides the obvious intellectual purposes, field trips have secondary social functions. Prior planning will assist teachers in balancing the intellectual and social components. Unfortunately, teachers who were educated in lab-oriented courses with limited field experiences are frequently unfamiliar with the philosophy, techniques, and organization of field trips and therefore tend to avoid them, (McKenzie, Utgard & Lisowski, 1986).

Planning a field trip, as with any lesson, begins with the preparation of objectives. The field trip is warranted as an instructional technique only if the field trip is the most effective and efficient procedure to obtain the experience needed to fulfill the learning objectives. Any field trip that is not related to classroom teaching has much less purpose and transfer of learning than a trip which grows from classroom activities and culminates back in the classroom.

Field trips need not be long, drawn out extravaganzas. Many educationally sound trips are on the school grounds, or within walking distance of the school. There are four levels of field trips (Shrigley, undated) which correspond with the time and distance involoved. First, are within-the-building excursions. Students may observe simple machines, experiment with gravity, calculate horsepower, and experiment with sound-all within a stairwell. Next are the field trips within walking distance of the school. These include the school grounds, nearby parks or empty lots, and municipal or commercial facilities. Third are the one-day journies. These may be trips to a museum, zoo, educational institution, special ecosystem, or geologic formation. Last are the multi-day journies. These include short field courses, study tours, and visits to sites far from the school. Planning increases with the distance and number of students.

The success of most field trips depends on leadership rather than location. Some urban school grounds appear so desolate; they look like deserts. However, no school grounds are without air, rain, wind, temperature, sunlight, pollution, rust, bacteria, plants, and insects. Rural schools have more to work with, but the examples will be the same. The animals observed may be ants rather than deer, flys and sparrows rather than hawks, but all of them will be doing something with a purpose. Observation will reveal that purpose. Erosion of bare soil around a school develops gullys in the same manner as the nearby farms. The pollution will be the same as the neighborhood. Many parallels may be drawn from observations made in the schoolyard.

From the teaching standpoint, the school grounds and nearby facilities have the advantage of being easily accessible. Repeated trips may be made to observe changes over time. Students may want to initiate projects to improve the grounds or study the changes. There are other advantages to using the school grounds for field experiences. There are no scheduling problems, dangers are minimized, and there are no transportation problems. It may be impossible to make a one hour bus trip to make a fifteen minute observation, but it is perfectly logical to leave the classroom for fifteen minutes to observe a topic of discussion.

All field trips can enrich the curriculum. They involve students in observation, thinking, formulation of hypotheses, and other scientific skills. They bridge the gap between abstract ideas and the real world. They make learning more meaningful and often stimulate students who appear bored. Field trips often give purpose to classroom studies. Short trips around the school often stimulate interests or questions that are best addressed on longer trips. These longer trips will be more meaningful when based on previous observations. The procedures of setting goals, observing and recording data, and returning to interpret data will be established. These longer field trips will, however, require additional planning.

Transportation becomes a major problem when planning long trips. If transportation is not available through the school system, a travel agency should be contacted. In making group travel plans, try to obtain more than one bid. Inquire about liability insurance. In dealing with travel agencies be sure to include the whole package (travel, lodging, meals, and insurance). Try to get a couple of letters of recommendation from previous users or names of colleges or schools which have used their services. Professional organizations can often help in recommending agencies. Some even have their own travel programs.

It is important that parents know when their children are taken off campus. A permission slip from the parents informs of us such. However, the common notion that a permission slip excuses us from our responsibility in case of injury is erroneous. The teacher who is negligent has to assume responsibility for his/her actions. Professional liability insurance is one method to assist in case of legal action. A waiver of liability and release of claims form may be used to lessen anxiety about conducting field trips. A sample of this form is attached to the end of this paper.

A trip within walking distance of the school would probably require additional adult assistance only when the students are young children. With older students on longer field trips, one adult for each six or eight children is a good ratio. Responsible parents may act as assistants. A parent who has nurses' training is especially valuable. Each adult is assigned six or eight students which operate as a subgroup. The teacher's group is typically students who are less self-disciplined. These students may become assistants and help carry the equipment, water, maps, and lunches. A tour guide may be

engaged and is well worth the investment. The guide's familiarity with local points of interest is immensely helpful in relieving the instructor of the task of relaying valuable information to students.

When a tour guide is not hired, the instructor should visit the site in advance. A brief visit will give you information on parking, safety hazards, guide services, and a geographical image of the facilities. A brief visit may mean the difference between a frustrating and smooth-running field trip.

- Plan for rain and carsickness!

When planning a field trip, a checklist is helpful. The following checklist adapted from LaVerne Fadale's "A Guide For The Field Trip Technique In Career Education" may be used to plan any field experience.

CHECKLIST: SHOULD I TAKE THIS TRIP?

YES NO 1. Will this field trip aid in clarification of concepts suggested in the classroom?

YES NO 2. Can the experience of the field trip be infused into the curriculum?

YES NO 3. Will the field trip be supported by staff, administration and parents?

YES NO 4. Will a field trip help correct misconceptions (i. e. interrelationships and factual content) through direct observation?)

YES NO 5. Will a field trip be worth the expenditure of time, money, and effort?

YES NO 6. Is there a facility at the proposed site that will contribute to the accomplishment of the instructional objectives?

YES NO 7. Will a field trip serve to accomplish objectives more thoroughly than if representatives went and reported back to the class?

YES NO 8. Will it be more effective to invite a resource person or show a videotape than to undertake the field trip?

YES NO 9. Will the trip provide an adequate sampling of desirable factors or processes to meet the instructional objectives?

YES NO 10. Will the field trip be valuable to other factors that are discrete to the particular unit or focus of study?

Number of YES answers: _____

Number of NO answers: _____

Should I take this field trip? _____

PART II
PLANNING FOR A FIELD TRIP

YES NO 1. Has a survey of potential sites and personnel suggested an optimal facility for meeting objectives?

YES NO 2. Has adequate information been obtained about the visitation site?

YES NO 3. Have the personnel at the visitation site been informed about your classes (numbers, grade level, objectives)?

YES NO 4. Does scheduling permit a trip to this site?

YES NO 5. Has the administration and other staff given support for the trip?

YES NO 6. Do the parents support this trip?

YES NO 7. Have arrangements been made and confirmed at the site?

YES NO 8. Will there be a visitation guide or director at the site?

YES NO 9. Has the group leader previously experienced this trip?

YES NO 10. Have definite arrangements for transportation been made and confirmed?

YES NO 11. Has a source of financing been located?

YES NO 12. Are all consent forms completed?

YES NO 13. Have arrangements been made for students with medical problems, handicaps, or special needs?

TEACHER/PUPIL

YES NO 1. Has the need and motivation been established?

YES NO 2. Has an understanding of the specific purposes of the trip been established?

YES NO 3. Have the desired outcomes of the trip been established?

YES NO 4. Have student committees been organized to help with planning, process, and follow-up?

YES NO 5. Have committee and individual responsibilities been identified?

_____ Thank you notes
_____ Reading
_____ Interviewing
_____ Note-taking
_____ Observing
_____ Drawing
_____ Asking questions
_____ Summarizing
_____ Speaking
_____ Evaluating

YES NO 6. Has the use of other instructional tools been utilized to provide a comprehensive background for the trip?

YES NO 7. Have teachers and students formulated a checklist to be carried by students on the trip? Are schedules, meeting places, messages, and what to and what not to bring included?

YES NO 8. Is there understanding of any necessary safety or special regulations such as dress, behavior, and materials?

YES NO 9. Do the parents have the necessary information to reach the student in case of emergency?

THE TRIP

YES NO 1. Is it possible for the participants to organize quickly and begin the experience?

YES NO 2. Do the participants function is specified roles whenever possible?

YES NO 3. Are the techniques designed to emphasize aspects of the trip appropriate?

YES NO 4. Do the site personnel respond to objectives of the group?

YES NO 5. Do the participants demonstrate they have been encouraged to react and question spontaneously?

YES NO 6. Had a return trip activity been implemented?

THE FOLLOW-UP

YES NO 1. Is there opportunity for follow-up after the trip?

YES NO 2. Has the experience related to the objectives?

YES NO 3. Has the group discussed questions formulated before the trip?

YES NO 4. Have observations made during the trip been discussed?

YES NO 5. Have follow-up activities been initiated?

YES NO 6. Have thank-you notes been sent?

YES NO 7. Has the trip been summarized?

YES NO 8. Are representatives of the facility available for follow-up questions?

EVALUATION

YES NO 1. Was the trip effective in terms of meeting instructional objectives?

YES NO 2. Did the trip provide motivation for new interests?

YES NO 3. Were student questions answered during the trip?

YES NO 4. Are evidences of growth such as self-reliance, courtesy, critical thinking, appreciation, or communication skills observed?

YES NO 5. Did the trip effectively meet objectives, therefore was a profitable experience?

YES NO 6. Do I want to repeat this experience?

COMMENTS:

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